

may be working one, two, or three jobs just to make ends meet, and sometimes it is still not enough. SNAP is a critical program that millions of Americans depend on to keep from going hungry.

Mr. Speaker, during the last Republican shutdown in 2013, SNAP had contingency funds available from the stimulus law that meant SNAP benefits continued uninterrupted. But stimulus funding was cut off in November of 2013. So this time around there is no back-up plan for SNAP.

Current law prevents the U.S. Department of Agriculture from spending SNAP money it doesn't have. Without congressional action, USDA will be forced to shut off retailers from accepting SNAP benefits within the first few days of October.

That means families won't be able to use their SNAP benefits to purchase food at any store that normally accepts SNAP, including grocery stores, big-box retailers, and corner stores.

Mr. Speaker, it is unfathomable to me that this would happen, that Republicans would threaten the food benefits of tens of millions of American children, families, and seniors, all just to score political points with their right-wing base. Whether Republicans shut down the government this week or in December, it is unacceptable to leave struggling families out in the cold.

As our economy continues to recover, I would remind my colleagues that SNAP is one of the quickest, most effective economic multipliers we have. Every \$1 in SNAP benefits generates about \$1.70 in economic activity.

About 80 percent of SNAP benefits are redeemed within 2 weeks of receipt, and about 97 percent are spent within a month. Every day SNAP pumps money back into our local economies and supports local businesses.

SNAP benefits can only be spent on food, meaning that a family can use its other income to meet its other essential needs, like paying rent, utilities, and medical care.

Mr. Speaker, not only would a government shutdown have a devastating impact on hungry families, it has the potential to result in serious economic harm to retailers that could ripple throughout our economy.

Already food banks, food pantries, and soup kitchens are bracing to serve an influx of clients if SNAP benefits are cut off. But despite the incredible work they do, these charities are already overburdened. The demand for food assistance is incredibly high.

They are working tirelessly every day to meet the need, and charities are already forced to pick up the slack from an inadequate SNAP benefit. All too often the benefit runs out before the end of the month and families must turn to charities just to cobble together enough to eat.

I cannot begin to imagine how overwhelmed antihunger agencies will be if millions of Americans lose access to

SNAP next month or the month after. Unfortunately, in a Republican-controlled Congress with the habit of going from one crisis to the next, this scenario is all too realistic.

A government shutdown would literally take food away from hungry Americans. It would be devastating for millions of Americans that are already struggling to put food on the table and make ends meet. Families who rely on SNAP cannot afford to have their food benefits disrupted even for a day.

Mr. Speaker, we should be working to end hunger now, not making hunger worse in this country, the richest country in the world. Quite frankly, it is unconscionable we are even in a situation where millions of hungry people are at risk of losing their food benefit.

Last week Pope Francis delivered an inspiring message to Congress. It is unthinkable that we could so quickly forget his call for compassion in helping the least among us. For millions of American families who are already struggling to put food on the table, we should be giving them a hand up, not taking food away.

Nobody in this Chamber will go without food if the Republicans shut down the government. None of our kids will go without food, but millions and millions of our fellow citizens will.

For the sake of 45 million Americans across the country and more than 700,000 in Massachusetts who depend on SNAP, I urge my Republican colleagues to work with Democrats on a long-term, bipartisan budget that puts families first. Families who rely on SNAP shouldn't have to worry about losing their benefits at the end of every short-term funding bill.

Whether it is this week or in December, our most vulnerable families simply cannot afford another government shutdown.

SPRUCE KNOB-SENECA ROCKS NATIONAL RECREATION AREA

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair recognizes the gentleman from West Virginia (Mr. MOONEY) for 5 minutes.

Mr. MOONEY of West Virginia. Mr. Speaker, I would like to take the time to recognize Spruce Knob-Seneca Rocks on their 50th year as a national recreation area.

Spruce Knob-Seneca Rocks National Recreation Area was established by an act of Congress on September 28, 1965, and has been enjoyed by families from all over the country ever since.

It is located in Pendleton County in the eastern panhandle area of my district in West Virginia. I was lucky enough to have had the privilege to visit just last month.

As the only true peak on the East Coast of the United States, it lures rock climbers from all around and boasts some of the most spectacular scenery on this side of the Mississippi.

Let me tell you, it is even more beautiful in person. Don't take my word for

it, though. I encourage everyone to plan a trip to this national treasure.

LIFE AT CONCEPTION ACT

Mr. MOONEY of West Virginia. Mr. Speaker, I would like to take the time to recognize the historic event that took place last week. On September 24, 2015, his Holiness Pope Francis became the first Pope to ever address Congress.

I would like to thank all that were involved in this planning process that led to this significant event, especially Speaker JOHN BOEHNER. It was truly an honor to take part in the first papal address to Congress.

Pope Francis' message was one of hope and love, and it reminded us that we need to keep fighting for the sanctity of life, marriage, family, and religious liberty.

Pope Francis clearly stated that there is a moral obligation to protect unborn babies. Protecting the unborn is one of the issues that compelled me to run for political office in the first place, and I am committed to continuing to fight in Congress.

During his address, the Pope said:

The Golden Rule also reminds us of our responsibility to protect and defend human life at every stage of its development. I am convinced that this is the best way, since every life is sacred, every human person is endowed with an inalienable dignity.

I am proud to be the lead sponsor of H.R. 816, the Life at Conception Act. The Life at Conception Act is a necessary component in the long-term protection of the unborn. In the 1973 *Roe v. Wade* decision, the Supreme Court justices wrote that, since the beginning of life is not defined by law, it is open to interpretation.

The Life at Conception Act simply defines by Congress that the life of a child begins at conception. Establishing personhood will protect the right to life of unborn children who are the most defenseless among us and need our protection.

This bill sets a standard for promoting and encouraging a culture of life. If enacted, it would simply affirm that unborn children are deserving of protection.

We currently have 122 cosponsors of this important bill. I encourage my colleagues in the House to cosponsor as well.

BIPARTISAN BUDGET

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair recognizes the gentleman from California (Mr. COSTA) for 5 minutes.

Mr. COSTA. Mr. Speaker, this Congress is making a habit, unfortunately, of acting in crisis mode, which is irresponsible and does a disservice to the fate and the trust that the American public has placed in us as their elected representatives, and this has a direct bearing on our economy. The Pope spoke to the need for us to come together and negotiate bipartisan solutions for the many challenges facing the United States and the world.

The first and most pressing issue is to fund government. Thankfully, tomorrow the House is expected to vote